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January 8, 2004

DMH LETTER NO.: 04-01

TO: LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH DIRECTORS  
LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM CHIEFS  
LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATORS  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS  
CHAIRPERSONS, LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH BOARDS

SUBJECT: CHANGES IN MEDI-CAL REIMBURSEMENT CRITERIA FOR  
EMERGENCY ADMISSIONS FOR PSYCHIATRIC INPATIENT  
HOSPITAL SERVICES

REFERENCE: Supercedes DMH Letter 03-08

Effective with dates of services on or after August 13, 2003, mental health plans (MHPs) may no longer deny treatment authorization requests (TARs) for psychiatric hospital inpatient services for a hospital's failure to notify the MHP of an emergency admission as required by Title 9, California Code of Regulations (CCR), Section 1820.225, "MHP Payment Authorization for Emergency Admissions by Point of Authorization," subsection (d)(1), which provides that TARs will be approved "when a hospital notifies the Point of Authorization within 24 hours of admission of a beneficiary to the hospital or within the time required by contract." Subsection (d)(1) of section 1820.225 of Title 9 has been superseded by the final federal Medicaid managed care regulation discussed below that must be applied to the Medi-Cal managed mental health care programs by August 13, 2003.

The relevant provision is Title 42, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 438.114(d)(ii), which provides that prepaid inpatient health plans (PIHPs) may not refuse to cover emergency services based on the emergency room provider, hospital, or fiscal agent not notifying the enrollee's PIHP of the enrollee's screening and treatment within 10 calendar days of presentation for emergency services. MHPs are PIHPs under the federal regulations. Enrollees are Medi-Cal beneficiaries whose county of Medi-Cal enrollment is within the contractually defined service area of the MHP. Effective for dates of service on or after August 13, 2003, TARs may be denied for failure of timely notification only if the notification is provided more than 10 calendar days from the presentation for emergency services.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact your Medi-Cal contract manager in the County Operations Sections below.



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[www.dmh.cahwnet.gov](http://www.dmh.cahwnet.gov)

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Sincerely,

*(Original Signed By)*

STEPHEN W. MAYBERG, Ph.D.  
Director

Enclosure

cc: California Mental Health Planning Council  
Chief, County Operations, North/Bay  
Chief, County Operations, South/Central